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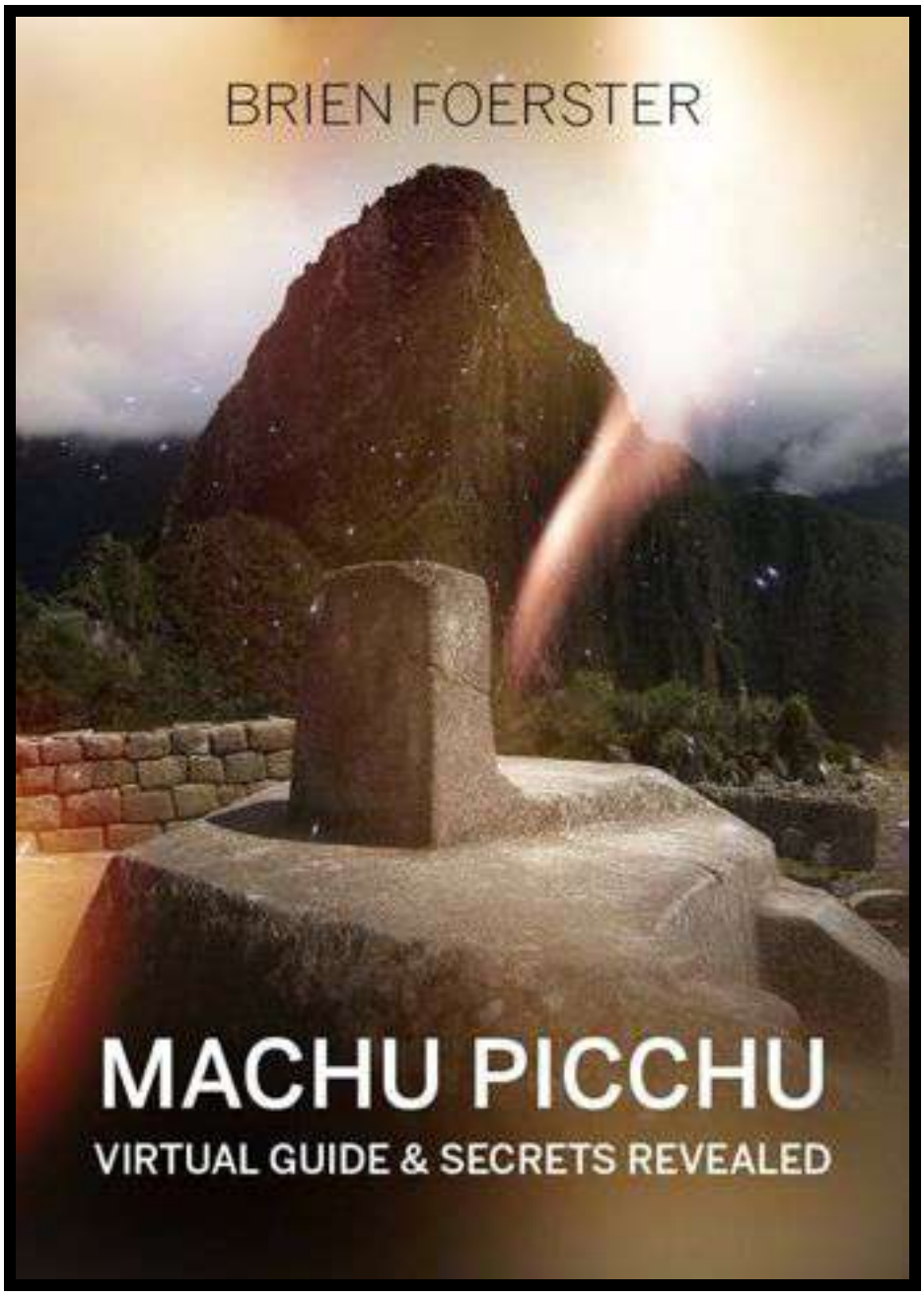

Machu Picchu: Virtual Guide and Secrets Revealed

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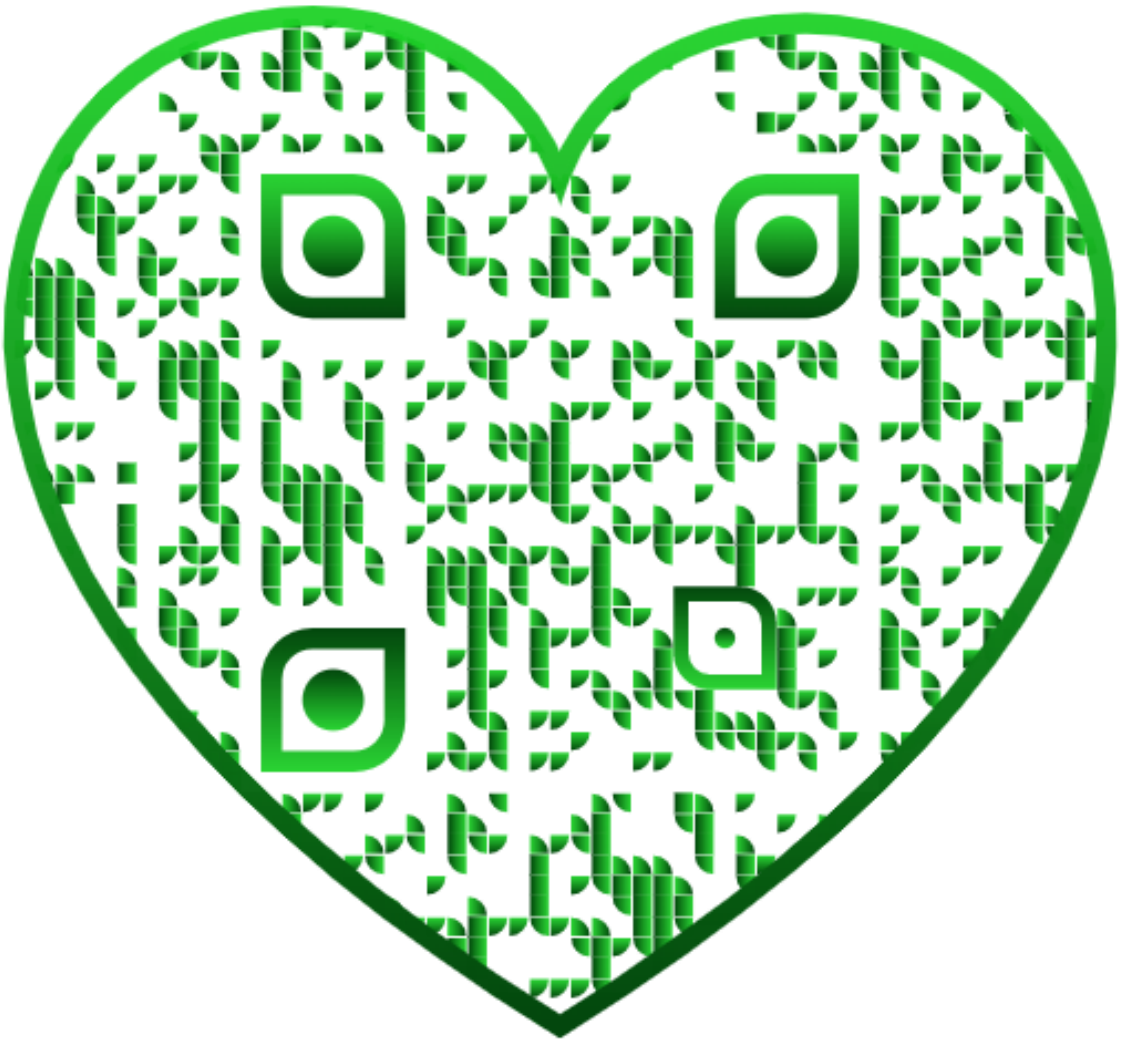
Atop a lofty mountain, on the edge of the Amazon rainforest in Peru, lie the ruins of a once proud city known to the world as Machu Picchu. In 2010 it was listed as "One of the Seven Wonders of the World" by UNESCO, and since then



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its fame and popularity have increased even further than before. On average, 2000 people per day, 365 days a year visit this place, drawn by it's exotic location, and the fact that it is reported as being the only Inca site of any size that the Spanish, under the conquistador Francisco Pizarro, never found, and thus never plundered for it's gold.

But what is the real story of this place? Who built it, when, why, and what explains its popularity to visitors from all over the world? To answer this, we must, as an honest gesture, balance our inquiry. Most so-called "ruins" of ancient cultures, and the term "ruin" seems to automatically put into the mind of the reader abandoned structures with crumbling stone walls, are the domain of study by university trained academics; archaeologists and anthropologists. They tend to analyze what the inhabitants left behind; pot shards, fire pits, writings (if any) and the buildings, etc.

What they tend not to do is ask the descendants of the "lost people," the nature of who the ancestors were, and accounts of their origins, accomplishments, and reasons for their demise. By adding both of these types of exploration together, the reader may achieve what may well be a much fuller understanding of, in this case Machu Picchu and the Inca people who built it, than they would from a purely western scientific approach, or one based solely on oral traditions. And believe me, the latter is much more difficult to obtain than the former, in most cases.

For some reason, and I frankly call it cultural arrogance many if not most western academics and writers never consult Indigenous people in regards to the constructions and people of the past. For example, the Mayan calendar, and the year 2012. Millions of dollars have been made by many writers on this subject, and the most common theme, as well as outcome of their treatise is that the world ends on December 21, 2012, in a series of natural as well as perhaps human made disasters. But what do the oral traditions of the Maya themselves say on the subject? The wisdom keepers of the traditions whom I have heard or spoken to say the same thing; a world ends on that date; not THE

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world, but “a world,” which is a term they use for an age, a period of time. And what happens after that? A new “world” or age begins.

Anyway, I have strayed off our main topic, but did so in order that we start this study and description of Machu Picchu knowing that I plan to give you as fully balanced a story as possible. So let us start with the Inca themselves, the makers of Machu Picchu. Who were they, and where did they come from?

The oral traditions vary to some degree, as does the archaeological evidence. But, the general belief is that the Inca are from the area, to the south, at or near Lake Titicaca. The most common story is that the Inca “rose from Lake Titicaca, summoned by their creator God Viracocha; who was the energy behind the creation of all things. The sun is often written of as having been this main deity, but in fact the sun, known as Inti in the Runa simi or Quechua language, was more likely the physical manifestation of Viracocha. Inti was thus a symbol, in real life, that the Inca could observe on a daily basis, much like, perhaps, the cross is a physical symbol of Jesus.

The two founding Inca were Manco Capac, and his sister and wife, Mama Ocllo. They were told by their creator Viracocha to leave the area of Lake Titicaca and found a new civilization.

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Fanciful portrayal of Manco Capac and Mama Occlo

The two most probable candidates for the homeland of the Inca, near Lake Titicaca, are the Island of the Sun, located in the lake, and presently part of Bolivia, or Tiwanaku (Tiahuanaco) which is approximately 11 miles south of the lake. I have been to the Island of the Sun, and was frankly disappointed with the lack of Inca period ruins there. So, it seems improbable to me that this was their

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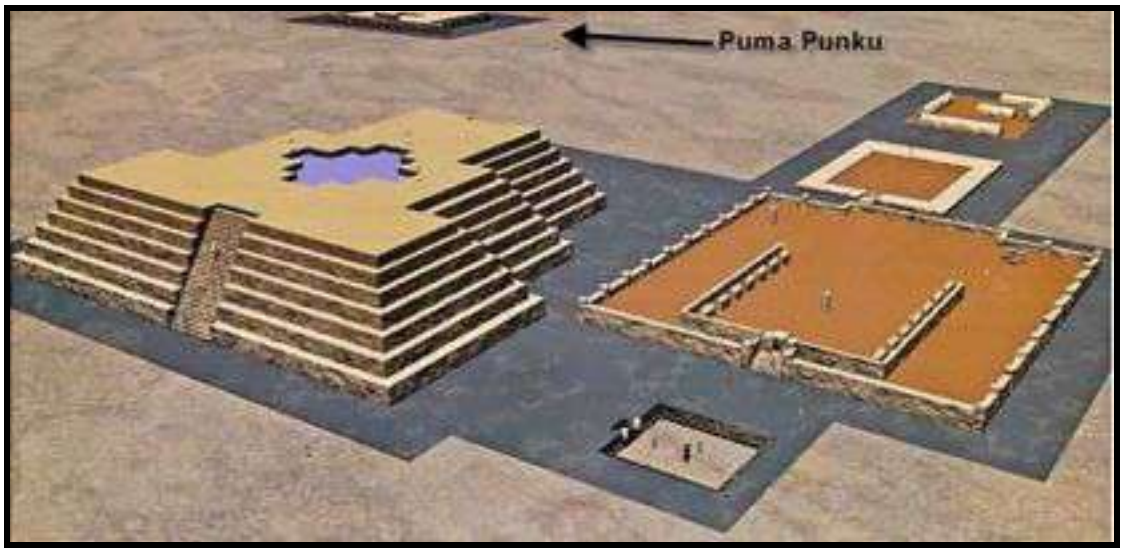
homeland. However, oral traditions to say that most of the Inca buildings that did existed at the time of the arrival of the Spanish in Cusco, in 1533, were dismantled by the Inca, and all gold and silver ornaments and sculptures were thrown into the lake, in order that the Spanish couldn't take them. Whether this is true or not, I have not been able to find out.

Inca stairway at the south end of the Island of the Sun

The other candidate is Tiwanaku, which still has many finely crafted stone walls, which are hallmarks of the Inca. Tiwanaku, according to conventional scholarship, began at approximately 300 BC, and was abandoned about 900 AD due to climate change; the area experienced a 40 year El Nino influenced drought, and this so weakened the last of the surviving people, that they were forced to leave. Also, as a result of this weakness, local Aymara language speaking tribal people attacked the people of Tiwanaku.

Even in its present somewhat dilapidated state, Tiwanaku shows us that its people were master stone masons and very spiritually minded.



The basic layout of what Tiwanaku would have looked like

A seven level pyramid and ceremonial courtyard welcome visitors to this day. The actual construction techniques employed here are similar in style and execution to some of those seen in Cusco and the Sacred Valley of Peru, and this is the strongest evidence that the Inca came from here. Also, in terms of timing, the collapse of Tiwanaku about 900 AD fits in with the theory that the Inca first arrived in Cusco and the Sacred Valley in or around the 12th century. Going back to our story, the creator God Viracocha told the first Inca, Manco Capac and Mama Ocllo to go forth, with a golden staff, and found what turned out to be Cusco.

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The fact that Manco Capac and Mama Ocllo are written of as being wedded brother and sister was not a one time event. It was the practice of the Inca, from their beginnings, and through until their destruction by the Spanish commencing in 1532, that the Sapa (High) ruling Inca marry his sister. It is believed by many sources that the term "sister" may have included direct cousins; in any event, it was important to the Inca that their royal, and in fact "divine" blood line be maintained in as pure a fashion as possible.

Comic like depiction of the arrival of the Inca in Cusco

The reasoning behind this practice was that the Inca were "Children Of The Sun," believing that they were direct descendants of Inti. However, as I have stated earlier, it is more probable that the sun, Inti, was used to symbolize the creator God Viracocha. As direct descendants of the divine, the purity of their bloodline was vital to the purity of their quest; to "civilize" all those that they came in contact with. Again, they are believed to have arrived in Cusco and the Sacred Valley about 1200 AD. At that time, there were at least 3 native groups

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living in Cusco; the Sawasiray, Allkawisas, and the Maras. It is believed that the Inca, who of course numbered more than just Manco Capac and Mama Ocllo, did not have to subdue these people with military force, but simply awed them with their vast knowledge of the "civilized" arts, including metallurgy, laws of ethical conduct, warfare, agricultural terrace construction, and other forms of engineering and building with stone.

This then was the beginning of Inca Cusco. From this time on there were a total of 12 sapa Inca, as follows:

Manco Capac 1200-1230

Sinchi Roca 1230-1260

LloqueYupanqui 1260-1290

Mayta Capac 1290-1320

Capac Yupanqui 1320-1350

Inca Roca 1350-1380

Yahuar Huacac 1380-1410

Viracocha 1410-1438

Pachacutec 1438 – 1471

Tupac Inca Yupanqui 1471 – 1493

Huayna Capac 1493 – 1527

Ninan Cuyochi 1527

Huascar 1527 – 1532

Atahualpa 1532 – 1533

Ninan Cuyochi, if he in fact existed died prior to his father, Huayna Capac, and thus was never truly at Sapa Inca ruler. Also, Huascar and Atahualpa ruled uneven halves of

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the Inca civilization after their mutual father Huayna Capac died, so neither of them was Sapa Inca.

During the 14th century, the leaders Sinchi Roca, Lloki Yupanqui, Mayta Capa, and Capac Yupanqui supposedly led several wars against neighbouring tribes of Cusco. By the time that Capac Yupanqui died, Inca Roca had gained enough power to become Hanan, and thus controlled all aspects of political, religious, and military affairs. However, it is also possible that these "wars" were fabrications of Spanish authors.

After Inca Roca's death, the Inca state began to decline under the rule of Yahuar Huacac. However, the next Sapa Inca, Viracocha, stabilized the state, which now reached a 50 km radius from Cusco. At this time the Chanka tribe had expanded its territories south of Cusco, and along with an alliance of other southern tribes, made a move to attack Cusco. The Chanka army greatly outnumbered that of the Inca, and as the battle started, the Chanka placed a statue of their founder in front of their troops. During the battle, the Inca took control of the statue, and perhaps seeing this as a terrible omen, the Chanka deserted the battlefield.

The next Sapa Inca, Pachacuti, whose name roughly translates as " Earth Shaker " began the great expansion period of the confederation. During his reign, he and his son, Tupac Inca Yupanqui brought much of the Andes, roughly modern day Peru and Ecuador, under Inca control.

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PACHACVTEC INGA.IX.
El Hazañoso Conſtituyó vn Stumo
Sacerdote y otros menores Solía arrojar
ō vna hónda pedazos d oro al Sol Cōqui.
Los Taramas, y otras Provin. Vivio 88 añ.
La Coya su Muger Mama Huaicu,
ſucēdiole su Hijo,

Stylized painting of the Sapa Inca Pachacutec

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Early expansion of the Tahuantinsuyu

Pachacutec was the founder of the Tahuantinsuyu; a federalist system which consisted of a central government with the Sapa Inca at its head, in Cusco, and four provincial governments with strong leaders: Chinchsuyu (NW), Antisuyu (NE), Contisuyu (SW), and Collasuyu (SE.) Pachacuti is also regarded as the builder of Machu Picchu. What sets the Inca's method of territorial expansion at this time, and perhaps earlier, from other cultures is both intriguing and very clever. They formed a confederation, not an empire, and this point can not be emphasized enough. Empires tend to grow based on the subjugation and destruction of other groups and nations; not only their political

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systems and military, but also their belief systems. A confederation is an alliance of groups and or nations.

Pachacutec sent spies to regions that he wanted to expand into. These spies brought back reports on the political organization, military might, and wealth of the prospective confederation candidates. He would then send messages to the leaders of these lands extolling the benefits of joining the confederation, offering them presents of luxury goods such as high quality textiles. Benefits to the candidate lands included access to the extensive Inca road system, some 15000 to 25000 miles in size, and the goods and services that were within the realm of the Inca's sphere of influence.The benefits to the Inca were access to goods and services that were particular to that region.

Most accepted the rule of the Inca, and acquiesced peacefully. It was only when a perspective Candidate refused to join the confederation that military force was used. This was the case in only three cases that I have found, and those were the Chanka from the nearby Apurimac region, the Chimu people in the north of Peru, near present day Trujillo, and the Chachapoya, known as the "Warriors of the Clouds" who lived on the edge of the Amazon jungle area east of Cajamarca.

It was traditional for the Inca's first born son to lead the army, and from the time of Manco Capac to Huayna Capac the first born son inherited the title of Sapa Inca. Pachacutec's son Tupac Inca began conquests to the north in 1463, and continued them as Inca after Pachacutec's death in 1471. His most important "conquest " was the kingdom of Chimor (Chan chan is a remnant of that culture) the Inca's only serious rival on the north coast of Peru. Tupac Inca then expanded into modern day Ecuador and Colombia.

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The Tahuantinsuyu under Tupac Inca

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Tahuantinsuyu by the time of Pachacutec

Tupac's son, Huayna Capac, added significant territory to the south. At its height, Tahuantinsuyu included Peru and Bolivia, most of what is now Ecuador, a large portion of what is today northern Chile (as far south as Santiago) and extended into corners of Argentina and Colombia. At this time, Tahuantinsuyu was the largest confederation or empire in pre-Columbian America.

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The eclipse of the Tahuantinsuyu with Huayna Capac

Huayna Capac spent his later years in Quito, Ecuador, where his Ecuadorian wife (his principal wife, or Qoya, lived in Cusco and was the mother of Ninan Cuyochi and Huascar) bore him a son, Atahualpa. Huayna Capac died in 1527, supposedly from small pox which had made its way through the native communities from Panama, and Ninan Cuyochi then became the Sapa Inca, as he was the first-born son. Ninan Cuyochi was, however, Sapa Inca for only a year, as he too succumbed to small pox. It is possible that Huayna Capac knew that Ninan Cuyochi's reign would be short, and he supposedly declared that Huascar and Atahualpa should share power, a definite break

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in the previous arrangement of passing the title of Sapa Inca from father to first born son.

In 1527, after the death of Ninan Cuyochi, Atalhualpa became sovereign of the ancient kingdom of Quito, and Huascar was given the rest of the Tahuantinsuyu. Civil war broke out between the two brothers at some point between 1527 and 1532. Huascar was eventually captured by Atahualpa in 1532 and executed. Atahualpa became Sapa Inca for only a period of months, when he in turn was executed by the Spanish in 1533, having arrived on the Peruvian shores a year previously.

The death of Ninan Cuyochi ended the traditional rite of Sapa Inca succession, as I stated above. With the death of Huascar and Atahualpa, the Tahuantinsuyu fell into a state of disarray, and the confederation began to crumble. In order to restore some sort of order, the Spanish installed Manco Inca Yupanqui, the younger brother of Huascar (from a different and lesser Cusquean mother) as Sapa Inca;in essence a puppet Sapa Inca. A feud developed amongst the Spanish; Pizarro, the Spanish leader, was fighting resistance and tribal separation to the north of Cusco, while his associate Diego de Amagro decided to claim Cusco as his own property. Yupanqui decided to use this intra-spanish feud to his advantage, recapturing Cusco in 1536, but the Spanish soon retook the city.

Manco Inca Yupanqui then retreated to the mountain retreat of Vilcabamba, close to Machu Picchu, where he and his followers remained for another 36 years, sometimes raiding the Spanish or inciting revolts against them. In 1572 this last Inca stronghold was discovered, and Tupac Amaru, Manco's son, was captured and executed, bringing the great Inca confederation and civilization to an end. Without the Sapa Inca being present as the political, religious, and military figurehead and center of power, it made it relatively easy for the Spanish to seize control of the masses of Peruvian people; a position that their descendants have even now in the twenty first century.

If the reader would like to learn more about the history of the Inca, and the "civil war" that occurred just prior to the arrival of the Spanish in 1532, please read my book: "A Brief History Of The Incas: From Rise, Through Reign To Ruin" available in paperback

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from http://www.adventuresunlimitedpress.com/proddetail.php?prod=BHOI&cat=36 and as an e-book through my website, www.hiddenincatours.com and amazon.com

And now onto Machu Picchu…

In the April 1913 edition of National Geographic magazine, published in the United States, including a three page fold out photo, a young archaeologist named Hiram Bingham III, who was raised in Hawaii and descended from Christian missionaries, wrote an article about a lost Inca city that he had discovered in the Peruvian jungle. That "city" was of course Machu Picchu.

Today, there is a train named after this great explorer, which takes the visitor, in luxury, from the Inca town of Ollantaytambo, in the Sacred Valley near Cuzco, to the small tourist village of Aguas Calientes, and back. From there, a 20 minute bus ride through several hair pin turns and over 1000 feet of vertical ascent takes you to the entrance to the "lost" city. This is not the only train that does this route every day; there are in fact 3 companies, travelling along the same stretch of track, which can take your there, but the Hiram Bingham run gives you free Champagne.

A lost city; forgotten in the tropical mountain jungle for about 400 years; Inca gold; danger, intrigue, heroism…wait a second…

How much of this is true, and how much is hype generated by the tourist industry and Peruvian government to get you to go there? A fair amount, in my opinion.

Machu Picchu is in fact the name of a mountain. In the indigenous language of the area, commonly called Quechua, Machu means old, and Picchu means bird or mountain. Hiram Bingham was actually looking for the last known refuge of the Inca, a site called old Vilcabamba, on the fringe of the Sacred Valley where it descends into the dense Amazon jungle. After finding some stone Inca ruins in the general area, such as the White Rock and Vitcos, a local Native person told him that similar structures could be found on the mountain called Machu Picchu.

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The famous White Rock, or Yurac Rumi

The most common tale of this majestic place was that it was abandoned by the Inca at the time of the Spanish conquest, around 1532 or so, and was lost to the world, becoming completely overgrown with jungle vegetation, until the "discovery" by Bingham in 1911.

Most guides, and academic publications, will tell you that Machu Picchu was simply a jungle clad mountain top prior to the reign of Pachacutec, and it was under his instruction that the whole complex was built between 1438 and 1472, and some assert that it was completed within an even narrower time frame. Theories vary as to its function prior to abandonment, from royal estate, to religious sanctuary, a settlement built to control the economy of conquered regions, a prison for a select few who had committed heinous crimes against Inca society, or even an agricultural experimentation, like Moray, shown below.

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The agricultural experimental station of Moray, near Cusco

Moray (also spelled Merey) is perhaps the finest example of the Inca's expertise at agricultural experimentation. It is said that each terrace acted as a microclimate whereby corn, potato, quinoa and other crops could be tested and cross bred to maximize the growing capacity of the Tahuantinsuyu. Since the population of people under Inca influence by the 16th century was at least 10,000,000 it was important to be able to grow the staple foods under as many climate conditions as possible.